

PREPUBLICATION VERSION

Teach Our Children Well: A Social Work Perspective on Integrating Values Education

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Abstract

This chapter draws on experiences from a values education project, which formed part of a major intervention research study aimed at crime reduction in schools in Durban, South Africa, where attempts were made to integrate values education in three disadvantaged schools over a range of interventions relating to HIV and AIDS education, gender relationships, discrimination and racism, and the promotion of crosscultural understanding. Written from a social work perspective, where values education mainly concerns professional training and clinical practice, it focuses more specifically on the role of teachers in values education. Rather than ‘values education’ as an add-on, it argues for values education to be integrated into all areas of school life from teacher education, through to educational content, and behaviour management as well as parent involvement and policy making. From the Crime Reduction in Schools Project (CRISP) experience, an integrated values education approach is best achieved through interdisciplinary collaboration in research and practice particularly in the promotion of practical, useful knowledge which directly addresses concrete social problems and enables teachers to address ‘values issues’ as they arise in the classroom, on the playground, or in the broader community.

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Though teachers are often surrounded by ‘value-talk’ in which ‘values education’ has become something of a buzzword or cliché, the lists of values displayed on posters school walls come to be seen as what ‘values education’ is: A lesson to learn or teach. Few teachers – or social workers for that matter – have grounding in moral philosophy or ethics. Few would understand that the lists of values plastered on school walls are a result of a long history of moral theorizing which has attempted to reduce moral complexity to rationally defined lists of values and principles. But most teachers know implicitly that values education is a complex endeavour (Bigger & Brown, 1999; Haydon, 1997; Leicester et al., 2000; Passy, 2005) and that translating these values or principles into practice is no easy matter. Though schools are not just about teachers but are complex systems which involve principals, administrators, managers, pupils – children and young adults – parents and a surrounding community, there is some agreement that teachers play a central role in values education (Copeland & Saterlie, 1990; Revell & Arthur, 2007) and that teaching is a value-filled endeavour (Lovat, 2007). Though much of the literature focuses specifically on teacher education and teachers as the main purveyors of values education, if values education is to have any purchase or currency, it has to become part of the lived experience of people in all school-related systems from policy makers through management to teachers, pupils, parents and the surrounding community. A school and an education system will achieve this when it becomes common knowledge that our schools stands for ..., i.e., our school lives and breathes the words on its badge or plaques.

This was the type of thinking that motivated the values education project and led to a range of intervention programs in a number of disadvantaged schools in South Africa soon after the post-apartheid transformation of school education policy. The National Education

Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996)² policy sought to involve all stakeholders in the management and administration of education and, most importantly, to give parents a voice in this process. It sought a cultural change towards inclusiveness, democracy and participation. This was an ambitious undertaking given that schools had yet to learn how to accommodate the changes to a non-racially based education system entailed. In any event, this applied most visibly to the schools in which the Crime Reduction in Schools Project (CRISP) was implemented (Gray, 1999; Gray & Collett van Rooyen, 2002). They were disadvantaged schools, three primary and three high schools, chosen for their proximity to the university to allow ease of access for the researchers and students involved in this intervention research project (see Table 1).

Some lessons from the Crime Reduction in Schools Project (CRISP)

The Crime Reduction in Schools Project (CRISP), funded by the Innovation Fund of the Department of Arts, Science, Culture and Technology in South Africa (1999-2002), was based at the University of (KwaZulu) Natal in Durban. It brought together a multi-disciplinary group of academics and researchers to develop and implement an intervention research program for crime prevention in schools. The academics were drawn from the professional and academic disciplines of psychology, anthropology, social work, nursing, architecture and town planning, education, adult education, and development studies.

² See <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/education.htm>

Table 1: Overview of research projects³

RESEARCH	PROJECTS	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	DISCIPLINE
Research on prejudice and intolerance	Culture, Conflict and Control: Interactional dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish the locale and nature of conflict within schools Establish reasons for conflict 	Anthropology
Preliminary research: Needs study Learners' profile	Monitor crime in schools Provide demographic profile of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a data base of incidents of crime and conflict in the school Scrutinise the nature of crime and conflict in schools 	Anthropology Development Studies Social Work
Prejudice and intolerance: Survey of current practices	Accommodating diversity through whole school development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine classroom policies and practices reflecting diversity and their impact on learning Examine interpersonal relationships and participation of learners in their schools 	Education
Perceptions and experiences of crime among school children	Crime I have seen project Media surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish baseline information on crimes witnessed by learners Document media incidence of crime 	Development Studies Social Work
AIDS and sexuality	Perceptions of sexuality and early sexual experience among teenage female learners Awareness of AIDS among high school learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish nature and extent of early sexual activity Use information to inform intervention on sexual rights and safe sex practices Pre- and post-test intervention to measure AIDS awareness intervention and its effectiveness 	Social Work Anthropology Nursing
Aggression and violence in schools	Measuring levels of aggression and the impact of violence on learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measure levels of aggression and tendency towards aggression among learners Establishing the impact of aggressive and/or violent experiences on learners 	Social Work
Program evaluation	Developing and evaluating service learning for psychology students Evaluating service learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the effectiveness of service learning using psychological interventions in crime prevention Assess the effectiveness of CRISP at one high school 	Psychology Education
Gender conflict	Gender conflict among adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore existing gender conflict Describe resultant behaviour Establish reasons for gender conflict 	Nursing
Moral education	Character building and social responsibility development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore learners and teachers perceptions of moral problems Develop a moral education program 	Philosophy Social Work
Project penetration	Interim program evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the extent of knowledge, awareness and 'reach' of CRISP in the target schools 	Social Work

³The purpose of all the research projects was to inform interventions within schools aimed at crime prevention. To this extent, the research was primarily developmental.

A developmental approach was taken to understand the range of issues that arise for children through their life course from beginners to graduates. For example, identifying abusive home situations was a priority for primary school teachers learning to understand why some children in their classes were withdrawn, unhappy or disruptive. There were similar challenges for high school teachers but often the cause and solution was quite unexpected. There were some classrooms in which young white teachers were intimidated by older black students, some of whom were well beyond what might be considered normal school-going age in developed western contexts. Completely by chance, a psychology student researcher discovered that many of these pupils simply could not read or write and engaged in recalcitrant behaviour to mask this inadequacy. Often the solution to complex problems is quite simple and, in this case, a group of students instituted a literacy program, which achieved immediate and startling results.

Another totally unanticipated empowerment objective was achieved through a steel drum band, which, initially the school principal said there was no time for in the normal school curriculum so pupils who wanted to be involved would have to do so before or after school. The musician cum project leader decided to run the program before school. The pupils had to start early. As well as learning to play the steel drums, their responsibilities involved arriving on time, unpacking the equipment, listening to the instructor and unleashing their creative talents. They learnt discipline. Soon the enthusiastic Jamaican rhythms began permeating the early morning airwaves and attracting an audience. More children than could be accommodated wanted to join. So impressed was the instructor with the children's natural talent, musical ability and sense of rhythm, that he decided to enter them in the Durban school band competition, which included competitors from the affluent private and public

schools with the luxury of music teachers and music in the school curriculum. Now the school had something to strive for. The principal began to include the drumming in the school assembly and the pupils went on to win second prize in the band competition. This was a thrilling moment and little did anyone know how music would prove to be the common language to overcome diversity. The overwhelming lessons learned were that the most successful and exciting and empowering programs were those which were unplanned and unanticipated. And there are many examples.

The nursing students came to the project expecting to run a health education program for parents but, on meeting with the mothers who attended the first meeting, they quickly realized that this was not what the mothers had in mind. They were busy trying to start a market garden and seized on the opportunity to use the nursing students' program to their own ends. Being just as enterprising, the nursing students decided to use the opportunity of the market garden to teach the parents about healthy eating and nutrition and to encourage them to grow foods that contributed to a balanced family diet, which, traditionally, tended to be dominated by cheap meat cuts and processed starch, especially maize meal and bread.

The social work students, rather than only running their counselling and education programs, ran an entrepreneurship program with adolescents, each of whom with a small amount of start-up capital, had to produce something marketable and sell it at a school flea market at a profit to be ploughed back into school funds.

The architecture and town planning students, following their interactions with school staff and participant observations, identified the hotspots for conflict on the playground at break time, but did not redesign spaces as expected. Instead they brought along a few footballs which dispersed children to more sites where everyone who wanted to play could be

accommodated. Conflict diminished. They also observed a rush to the toilets, a constant problem in these schools due to excessive use and demand, and vandalism encouraged by poor lighting. The school in question was already surrounded by barbed wire with an armed guard at the gate during school hours. At the completion of their project, the students presented the school with an architectural plan of how school spaces might be economically redesigned, including better lighting and more toilets, to minimise opportunities for conflict.

The anthropology students sought to encourage teachers to build English and maths exercises around issues of direct relevance for the pupils, e.g., to develop reading study or comprehension exercises and maths problems around AIDS and HIV. The projections being proposed by researchers as to the ‘multiplication’ or spread of this pandemic in the population became far more meaningful when students were required to reflect on them through exercises in the classroom.

What, one might well ask, has any of this to do with values education? We deduced that values education was a fancy name for life skills, for self-esteem building, for empowerment, and for cooperative coexistence. These were not skills that needed special lessons. They were strengths or capacities that needed to find expression and this they did when a conducive environment was created or facilitated, i.e., ‘a space of dialogue and possibility’ (Greene, 1988, p. xi), for imagining a better school and community. Minimal resources were required. Even disadvantaged schools could provide opportunities for life-skills development, for adolescent boys to learn how to treat adolescent girls with respect, to understand AIDS and safer sex practices, to learn budgeting and literacy and numeracy skills, and to develop their creative talents. A school must pulsate with energy for then there is no time for mischief!

There were times, however, where more directive programs were needed, especially when helping teachers deal with the newly created diversity in the schools and to seize on opportunities for values education in the classroom, at the time when problems arise. For the most part, teachers from different races had difficulty mixing. The school common room seemed to have invisible dividing lines and unmarked chairs appeared to have teachers' names on them because everyone appeared to have a rightful place. Even a blind person would know exactly where to find Mr X or Mrs Y. If this were the situation between staff, how much more difficult was it for teachers in the classroom? They needed the confidence to confront value issues head on when pupils lied or cheated or treated one another disrespectfully or when racist comments were made. Thus a targeted values education program for teachers was devised and implemented by a social worker and philosopher who developed a manual for this purpose, introducing teachers to Beauchamp and Childress' (1994) ethical principles and to rudimentary philosophical theories about morality and ethical decision making. But cultures do not change overnight or after a single program and teachers struggled to cope with the complexities of the new situations they found themselves in.

Another important lesson for all involved in CRISP was the realization that, in the face of apparently insurmountable problems – against all odds, including teacher hijackings, vandalism, blocked toilets, broken windows, Fort Knox like barricading making schools feel like prisons with high walls or barbed wire fences – everyone came to school. Teachers wanted to teach and pupils wanted to learn. There was dedication and commitment and abundant strength and good intention. And children managed to concentrate even though many lived in social turmoil and most had witnessed or experienced gross violence. Many were still in violent or abusive situations. This was borne out by the Crimes I Have Seen

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project which invited older students to submit essays and younger pupils to provide drawings of the crimes they had seen. So abundant was the data collected that to this day, it has not been properly analyzed.

I have deliberately pitted this introductory discussion at the level of generality, first to protect confidentiality and secondly, to introduce my ideas on values education in schools from my social work perspective. However, further reading on values education in schools reveals greater complexities regarding how one builds sustainable Values Education Programs in Schools. It is to some of this educational literature that I will now turn.

The values education literature

With reference to my title, we cannot teach our children well until we have taught our teachers well and there appears to be some agreement in the educational literature that values education in schools begins with the education of teachers in training. Teachers are the essential role models of values education and their behaviour has a strong influence on pupils (Copeland & Saterlie, 1990). Reporting on a task force involved in designing and implementing a values education program, Copeland and Saterlie (1990) define values education as follows:

All education is infused with values. The ultimate goal of education is the positive influence of student behavior, and each student's values guide and help determine that behavior. In the process of teaching, the teacher's values are demonstrated to the students. In every class and throughout the school—indeed, throughout the school system—values are demonstrated through actions, procedures, policies, and attitudes

from the board of education, to the superintendent and his staff, to the principal and teachers, to the cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and to the students (p. 48).

As Lovat (in press) notes:

This would mean restructuring the whole learning environment for the benefit of student achievement and would involve: pedagogical strategies and techniques used by teachers; catering for the diverse needs of students; organizing of schools for the express purpose of student achievement (school coherence); professional development of teachers; and, the creation of a trustful, supportive ambience in the school (p. 3).

This also means that an appreciation of the all-pervasive nature of values needs to part of teacher education in the same way that it is for social work students. Unless teachers have a sense of moral obligation and a deep sense of responsibility in shaping children's values, lists of values, such as those promulgated by the Australian government's National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools, will remain just that, a framework with the list of values framed somewhere on school walls, which soon goes unnoticed. However, as Revell and Arthur (2007) note, there is no conclusive evidence that teacher education courses have an 'impact on teachers' attitudes and beliefs about teaching. [Nevertheless] [i]f character education is an implicit requirement of the curriculum then it would be useful to understand how teachers develop their understanding of character and whether teacher education courses can [have an] impact on this understanding' (p. 79-80). But there is some evidence that values education programs have an impact on pupils' acquisition of personal values of respect, honesty, trust, courage, responsibility and so on (Dılmaç, Kulaksizoğlu & Ekşi, 2007; Perry & Wilkenfeld, 2006).

While character education is distinct from other forms of values education, both are informed by the belief that moral behaviour should *be taught* (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006; Revell & Arthur, 2007), i.e., that it does not happen automatically or without some sort of training. As in social work, teachers believe in the moral superiority of their personal values and are unlikely to develop an appreciation of the diversity of values without moral education in which they learn to reflect critically on their own values and on the impact of their behaviour on others (Gray & Gibbons, 2007). In the absence of moral education, teaching values becomes a rule-following, behaviour management approach, where teachers are more likely to discipline pupils when they break the rules (Revell & Arthur, 2007) rather than proactively use everyday situations and experiences to teach them the importance of living harmoniously with others, which lies at the heart of moral behaviour. Thus it is that moral education is not so much education about morality as it is about teaching pupils how to get along with one another, how to treat one another with respect, how to respect one another's beliefs and values, and so on. It was this that lay at the heart of the CRISP Values Education Program referred to above.

Character education helps in this process because it teaches the virtues of the good person, i.e., one who cares about others, feels responsible for others' welfare, and is able to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Lapsley and Narvaez (2006, p. 269) outline eleven principles in their whole-of-school approach to character education:

Principle 1 asserts that good character is built upon a foundation of 'core ethical values' – caring, honesty, fairness, responsibility and respect, which are often endorsed by national organizations, such as the Australian Department of Education and Science (DEST, 2005)

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and seek to foster ‘pillars of character’ – trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Such policy documents assume that these values are universally valid, promote the common good, affirm human worth and dignity, contribute to individual welfare, deal with issues of right and wrong, and facilitate democratic practices.

Principle 2 states that educational programs should teach these core values.

Principles 3 states that they should be taught ‘holistically’, i.e., with attention to their cognitive, affective, social, cultural, and behavioural components in a way that engages school stakeholders at all levels in a deliberate, proactive and comprehensive way.

Principle 4 emphasizes the importance of creating caring school communities.

Principle 5 asserts the importance of providing students with opportunities to engage in moral action, such as community service and outreach.

Principle 6 argues for the integration of effective character education in a rigorous, challenging academic curriculum.

Principle 7 holds that a stimulating curriculum fosters intrinsic motivation to do the right thing by building a climate of openness, trust and respect, encouraging a sense of autonomy and responsibility, and building shared norms and commitment through dialogue, discussion and democratic decisionmaking.

Principle 8 focuses on the importance of engaging all school staff.

Principle 9 emphasizes the need for shared educational leadership, which provides for ongoing and long-term support for moral education initiatives.

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Principle 10 brings in the engagement of parents, families and community stakeholders.

Principle 11 promotes continuous assessment and evaluation.

But how will values – and character – education become an intrinsic part of the teacher's responsibility if values and ethics remains peripheral to professional training and if, as Revell and Arthur (2007) found, 'moral discourse ... plays such a marginalised part in the training of teachers' (p. 85). So while moral education might have gained a new prominence within curriculum policy via the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools (DEST, 2005), as in the UK, 'the nature of that education is characterised by an emphasis on behaviour and responsibilities rather than moral reasoning or philosophy [based on the belief that] *responsible behaviour* should be taught' (Revell & Arthur, 2007, p. 80 emphasis added) and the promotion of certain values in schools is obligatory.

In their study of trainee teachers' understanding of moral education, Revell and Arthur (2007) found several contradictions: First, while teachers and educators consistently referred to their professional identity and teaching and learning within schools in moral terms, educational ethics and moral discourse were absent in the courses under study and perceived as peripheral to their training. Secondly, there appeared to be tension between trainee teachers' understanding of the moral nature of teaching and their willingness to act on that understanding. Most respondents believed that teachers should encourage pupils to reach their own conclusions rather than those that were sympathetic to those held by the school. Yet, a key tenet of moral education is that teachers should intervene by providing moral guidance to pupils (Arthur, 2003; Revell & Arthur, 2007). As already mentioned, most were only prepared to intervene when school rules were breached and few took proactive measures

by deliberately seeking opportunities for moral education other than by allowing ‘pupils to express themselves’ (Revell & Arthur, 2007, p. 87). Further, teachers have proved unwilling to consciously influence children or to contradict parental values even where they may be contradictory to school or family values (Passy, 2005). This suggests that they take an uncritical approach to moral and values education (Carr & London, 1998). This is because most have been ill-prepared to deal with moral issues in the classroom (Strike, 1996; Tirri, 1999).

Teacher education

If the quality of values and moral education in schools is to improve, i.e., if quality teaching is to be promoted, and if teachers are to deliver values education in consistent rather than arbitrary ways, then these issues must form a pivotal part of teacher education (Lovat, 2007). Here is where education might learn from social work, where the importance of social work as a discipline and profession is taught and where social work is shaped as an intrinsically moral and value-based endeavour (Gray, 1991, 1996; Gray & Stofberg, 2000; Stofberg & Gray, 1988). Thus professional ethics and values promotion is an essential part of the social worker’s identity. Gaining insight into personal values and beliefs via critical reflection is an important part of social work education as is focused learning on professional values and ethics as a first step (Gray & Gibbons, 2007). But professionalism requires the ability to think beyond the personalized, individualized domain to seeing one’s professional role as situated in a broader community, cultural, social, and political context from which moral authority and professional and public accountability arise (Blackburn, 2002; Popkewitz, 1987). It requires that student teachers be given opportunities to engage with moral and value issues

that underlie teaching practice (Tomlinson, 1995), that they understand their affective dimensions (Dılmaç, Kulaksizoğlu & Ekşi, 2007), that they develop the ability to make professional judgements (Nixon, 2004), that they see teaching as a moral enterprise (Pring, 2001), and that they become accountable professionals (Sockett, 1999). If teachers are to be able to teach values education confidently in the classroom, to reflect on their practice and be professionally committed to promoting moral thinking and sound values as part of their professional identity, then providing student teachers with opportunities to explore moral issues and their own personal and professional values and beliefs is essential (Hollinsworth, 1989; Korthagen & Lagerwerf, 1996). A solid grounding in moral education and professional ethics enables teachers to make autonomous decisions guided not merely by their personal experiences but also by their comprehensive, in-depth understanding of moral issues in relation to their field of practice (Bull, 1990). It also leads them to challenge their own preconceptions and prejudices (Edwards & Protheroe, 2003) and those of others, including parents, fellow teachers and pupils, where appropriate and necessary, e.g., when racist or derogatory comments about others are made. As noted by Revell and Arthur (2007): ‘If teachers are to retain any professionalism in the area of moral education then the presumption that they should engage with the ideas that inform models of moral education as well as the delivery of that education should be an integral part of their training’ (p. 89).

Teaching values education

Haydon (1997) claims that much of the literature on values education is extremely vague and hortatory, proclaiming what must be done rather than how it might be accomplished. Several more recent papers have been identified wherein the teaching of values in particular contexts

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has been outlined, e.g., Hartsell (2006) in relation to environmental values, Bills and Husbands (2005) in relation to mathematics, Paterson (2009) in relation to civic values, Aplin (2007) in relation to heritage studies, and Passy (2005) in relation to family values.

Hartsell (2006) notes that the teacher plays a pivotal role as a caring individual who facilitates values education by creating an atmosphere in the classroom to teach and encourage the development and exercise of values clarification skills. Moral and value education is not a process of indoctrinating moral principles into children but of opening up talk and reflection on values so as to encourage value awareness. It provides students with opportunities to identify moral issues, to become aware of their own values and those of others, and to analyze their own thinking on morals and values. The university classroom provides an opportunity to model what happens in the classroom situation and to teach student teachers how to identify and understand class dynamics so as to recognize and capitalize on opportunities for values education *in situ* (Gray & Gibbons, 2007).

Paterson (2009) believes that education is one of the main sources of civic values and engagement, which equips people with, among other things, the capacity for abstract thought and the opportunity to develop value awareness in a climate of open discussion. Most importantly, however, education tends to lead people to acquire socially liberal views. That said, a myriad of factors determine the level of civic engagement, including social class, parental interest in politics, cognitive ability, and social networks. Paterson's (2009) study shows that those schooled in the social sciences, arts and humanities tend to be more left wing, antiracist, libertarian, tolerant of non-traditional family forms, concerned about the environment, and politically engaged. Her findings make a strong argument for trainee teachers to have a solid grounding in the arts and social sciences if a liberal mindset is what is

required for values education which rests heavily on a non-judgemental attitude. She also shows how teachers from different disciplinary backgrounds come to the school with different teaching cultures and values. Those from science, business and technology tend to be more conservative than their social science and arts colleagues.

What, one might ask, is distinctive about what is taught in the arts and social sciences? Hursh (2008) believes it has to do with engagement in ‘social and philosophical analysis’, with triggering the ‘sociological imagination’ through which ‘we examine the larger structural forces that affect our lives and make sense of our experience as not idiosyncratic but societal. It is the way in which we come to understand our *personal troubles* as *public issues*’ (p. 21 emphasis in the original). For Hursh the primary goal of education is not to produce obedient citizens but imaginative thinkers, who can imagine and create a better world, i.e., to produce fully rounded human beings with the ‘ability to imagine a better world and to do something to make it better’ (Bauman, 1999, p. 1). Values education offers a means to ‘develop learning activities that are meaningful ... that build on the students’ experiences in schools’ (Hursh, 2008, p. 33).

It is this broader understanding that teachers need to have. They need to be able to see their pupils not only as faces in the classroom or part of a school but also as members of families and part of the broader school community and wider society. This is why values education needs to include an element of community outreach, of engagement with the broader community through involvement first of parents and then of the wider community. In the schools where CRISP was located, i.e., in communities with a high incidence of crime and violence, one measure to improve social conditions is engagement with the community such that the community feels a sense of ownership over the school and its activities. Of

course, there is also need for simultaneous intervention at a structural level, i.e., for government input, but the cumulative input of teachers, pupils, school administrators, and parent bodies quickly adds up to an integrated whole-of-school approach which makes the teacher's work at the coalface of the classroom all the more meaningful, valid and fulfilling for all involved.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on lessons from a school-based intervention research program and a social work perspective to make some suggestions as to the importance of values education in schools. It has focused particularly on the teacher's role, which, to be effective, requires the support of the broader school and community. It argues that some grounding in arts and social science subjects is a necessary part of teacher education as is study of moral philosophy and professional ethics. Though not developed more fully in this context, the social work literature on values and ethics offers a rich resource for educators that would provide fortification for values education not only for teachers in training but also for pupils in schools. There needs to be communication between families, schools and communities to ensure that values education is being supported at all levels and to avoid the oft-heard 'the parents should be teaching them this' or 'the school should be teaching them that'. Values education is needed to give meaning to the list of values promoted by the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools and to make them part of the lived experience of everyday school life throughout Australia and beyond.

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